

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1144

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

S E C R E T JIDDA 3235

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, SA, IR

SUBJECT: SHAH OF IRAN'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF: TEHRAN 4087

1. DURING THE AMBASSADOR'S MAY 5 MEETING WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD, FAHD DESCRIBED THE SHAH'S RECENT VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AS HAVING BEEN "GOOD AND TIMELY." HE SAID THAT HE HAD GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH THE SHAHBASED UPON "GREAT MUTUAL COMPATIBILITY" AND THAT THE VISIT HAD HELPED TO STRENGTHEN THESE RELATIONS.

2. FAHD SAID THESE TWO NEIGHBORING MUSLIM COUNTRIES NDDDEDE TO COOPERATE FOR THE GOOD OF THE WHOLE AREA. IN THE PAST THE SHAH'S RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD HAD BEEN LESS THAN WARM AND FRIENDLY, WHICH FAHD SAID WAS LARGELY THE RESULT OF NASSER'S POLICIES.

3. FAHD SAID THAT SAUDI ARABIA'S POLICY WAS TO CULTIVATE FRIENDS AND TO TURN ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS AND IN THE LIGHT OF THIS HE SAW NO REASON WHY THE SHAH WOULD NOT MAKE AN EFFORT TO FURTHER IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA.

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4. COMMENT: THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR HERE TELLS US THAT THE SHAH TOLD HIS COUNTERPART IN TEHRAN THAT HE HAD BEEN PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY HIS MEETING WITH KING KHALID: HE HAD BEEN EXPECTING A CIPHER BUT FOUND A PERSON OF SOME SUBSTANCE. FAHD HAS FOR SOME TIME FELT WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS THE SHAH. WE SUSPECT THAT THE SHAH'S REGARD FOR KHALID MAY IN FACT HAVE RESULTED FROM A DEGREE OF DEFERENCE ON KHALID'S PART WHICH FAISAL NEVER SHOWED. THE SHAH DIDN'T LIKE FAISAL WHOME HE CONSIDERED FANATICAL AND INFLEXIBLE; THE LATE KING FOR HIS PART FOUND THE SHAH ARROGANT AND OVER-BEARING. THEIR RARE MEETINGS COULD BE COUNTED AS SUCCESSES IF RELATIONS DIDN'T DETERIORATE AS A RESULT. SINCE PERSONALITIES COUNT FOR A GREAT DEAL IN SAUDI ARABIA, AS THEY DO IN IRAN, WE CAN HOPE FOR SOME FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN SAUDI-IRANIAN RELATIONS.

6. ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, THESE RELATIONS WILL DEPEND ON PERCEIVED MUTUAL SELF INTEREST AND COULD RAPIDLY FOUNDER OVER POLICY DIFERRENCES. NOTHING, FOR INSTANCE, COULD BE MORE LIKELY TO CAUSE A RAPID SOURING OF RELATIONS THAN THE CREATION OF A "TEHRAN-CAIRO AXIS," WHICH THE SAUDIS COULD ONLY SEE AS DESIGNED TO SKEWER THE KINGDOM. WE DEFER, OF COURSE, TO THE JUDGMENT OF EMBASSY CAIRO, BUT IMAGINE THAT THE EGYPTIANS WOULD NOT RPT NOT UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES BE PARTICLARLY INTERESTED IN SUCH AN AXIS. EHPTIAN ARABISM MAY BE FLAWED BUT WE CANNOT PICTURE EGYPT BEING COMFORTABLE IN AN ALLIANCE WITH A NON-ARAB STATE WHICH OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES PERCEIVE AS THREATENING.

7. IF, HOWEVER, SUCH AN AXIS WERE TO COME ABOUT IT COULD WELL PUSH SAUDI FOREIGN POLICY OFF IN DIRECTIONS WE WOULD PROBABLY NOT CONSIDER TO BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE SECURITY OF THE REGION. A RIYADH-BAGHDAD-DAMASCUS AXIS SEEMS DISTINCTLY IMPLAUSIBLE AT THE PRESENT MOMENT BUT THE SHAH MIGHT HAVE THE ABILITY TO BRING IT OFF.

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8. AS FOR THE SHAH'S REACTION TO A QADHAFFI TYPE GOVERNMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA, WE HAVE GIVEN SERIOUS THOUGHT TO WHETHER U.S. INTERESTS COULD TOLERATE SUCH AN EVENTUALITY AND RAISED THIS ISSUE IN COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT. WE HAVE EQUALLY GRAVE DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER WE COULD TOLERATE IRANIAN CONTROL OVER THE PETROLEUM RESOURCES OF

BOTH SIDES OF THE PERSIAN GULF. THE SHAH APPARENTLY
RAISED THE QUESTION CASUALLY. WE SHOULD NOT DISMISS
IT IN THE SAME WAY.
AKINS

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NNN

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